



About Lake Creek Pioneer Hall

There have been some comments, concern, and misunderstanding about the Lake Creek Pioneer Hall that has been brought to the attention of the Lake Creek Historical Society's Board of Directors. We hope the following information will help you understand what has transpired about the original Lake Creek Community Hall.

In the late spring and summer of 1990, a small group of people got together to repair and restore the Lost Creek Covered Bridge and called themselves the Lost Creek Covered Bridge Citizens Task Force. The first organizational meeting was held on March 15, 1990. The Rogue Valley foundation in Medford agreed to sponsor the LCCB Task Force and be in charge of supervising the collection, dispersing and financial reporting for the Bridge project. The LCCB Task Force raised approximately \$37,125 in grants and materials donated for this project. The Lost Creek Covered Bridge was restored to its present condition in the summer of 1990.

In May 1990 some of the original task force members formed the Lake Creek Historical Society. Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws were filed and the Society received its Nonprofit Corporation Status. The Society became an affiliate of the Oregon Historical Society.

The LCHS was formed to pursue other projects in our area with an historical significance. There had been growing

concern for the future of the "Lake Creek Community Hall." It was in bad disrepair, there was no foundation under it and the back was beginning to rot, as was the entire footing and it would soon be condemned. It was being used by a very few people and the "community" had not shown much interest or concern in maintaining it as it was.

The original lease agreement for the Lake Creek Community Hall was signed on December 20, 1944, between L.H. Wyant and Agnes Wyant and the "Lake Creek Community Club" of which Donald Grissom was the president. Since 1944 the "Hall" has been under the care of the Lake Creek Community Club.

Ralph Wehinger met with a group of local residents (Victor Gardener and Don Grissom, and some others) to discuss the future of the Hall and alternatives for its upkeep and use. At that meeting the Lake Creek Community Club expressed their agreement that the Lake Creek Historical Society assume the lease from them and take over the restoration, care and use of the Hall. An Assignment of Leasehold Rights from the Lake Creek Community Club to the Lake Creek Historical Society was signed on August 28, 1990. The Lake Creek Historical Society agreed that the community would continue to have access to the hall.

The Historical Society met with Sam Wegner, Executive director of the Southern Oregon Historical Society at the

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Community Hall. He agreed that since the Hall was built in the WWII era as a community effort and the way it was constructed that it could be considered an historical building and that it would qualify for monies from the County Historical Fund and providing it be restored as close to its original form as possible. Since August 1990 the Society has put a new foundation under the building, fully insulated the Hall, installed a heating and air conditioning system and added on restrooms. In the back of the main hall a kitchen, Historical Society office space and storage area was put in. Total renovation and equipment costs raised from grants, donations and gifts of \$150,000 were obtained by the Society. The Hall is furnished with a fully equipped kitchen, and there are available a TV-VCR, projection screen and projector for exhibits or other uses of the Hall.

The Lake Creek Historical Society can apply for county Historical Fund monies to help operate the offices of the Society and building for use for exhibits and other functions concerning an historical nature. The board chose to change the name from the "Lake Creek Community Hall" to the "Lake Creek Pioneer Hall."

The concern we are hearing from some aspects of the community is that before the lease for the Hall was assigned to the LCHS, the Hall was always open and that now it is locked. There was very little in the hall at that time, only a wood stove and some bare lightbulbs, and the Lake Creek Community Club chose to leave it open.

Because of insurance, vandalism exposure, and insurance regulations, the Board of the Lake Creek Historical Society cannot leave the doors open at all times. The building is available for community use and access by contacting a Board Member or call the office at 826-1513. There is a small fee to help defray the costs of maintaining the building, electric, insurance and supplies. The fee can be waived at the discretion of the Board.

The Board feels that we have created a useful, comfortable, well-equipped building that is accessible for community use and we hope that it will be used often and encourage the communities' increased usage of these facilities.

Landscaping Plans

We have begun landscaping the Pioneer Hall this Spring and hope to have it completed by the end of this summer. Darlene McCulloch, 826-7237, is in charge of the landscaping project.

The focus for the Pioneer Hall landscaping includes the use of herbs and native plants and "heirloom" plants which were used by the homesteaders. We are constructing several raised beds, showing antique plants which were a part of the homestead necessities and landscaping. We would love to have some plants, seeds or bulbs that you may have in your garden which were a part of your heritage.

The landscaping will also include native plants which were utilized. Examples are cattails, mullein, plantain, purslane, miner's lettuce, wild strawberries, elderberries, Oregon grape, dandelion, teasel, horsetail, and chicory.

We also plan on drying the plants and flowers for an indoor display of native plants. Anyone that has experience in drying flowers would be welcomed to help us.

We hope to make this garden as authentic as possible and want to welcome all who wish to contribute to this project.

Your assistance would be appreciated. We can use volunteers at all times.

The following is a list of possible herbs for our garden:

Plant List

Agrimony	Good King Henry	Wormwood
Angelica	Hyssop	Yarrow (white flowered)
Ajuga	Jacob's Ladder	Yerba Buena
Bergamot	Joe-Pye Weed	Mullein
Borage	Lady's Bedstraw	Chervil
Chamomile	Lady's Mantle	Corn salad
Comfrey	Lavender	Nasturtium
Costmary	antolina	Parsley
Coreopsis	Saponaria	Sage
Dryer's Broom	Sweet Cicely	Sorrel
Dryer's Woodruff	Sweet Woodruff	Rosemary
Feverfew	Tansy	Thyme
Germander	Valerian	

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❁ A TALE OF TWO BACHELORS ❁

by Helen E. Barrow

Some fifty years ago, a young man from down "South" spied a local Lake Creek girl of German descent out by a cow barn, trying to convince a stubborn calf to go where obviously it did not want to be. He was not deterred by her bib-overalled get-up, but proceeded to get acquainted, court, and marry her three years later. When caught in this bedraggled outfit, the girl was all of 18, new teacher's certificate in an envelope, and eager to teach the one room school in the adjoining South Fork School District. She was back home, a school marm in the community where she had always lived.

One of the first things this young fellow learned was that he had best not speak evil of just about anyone in the entire Lake Creek area, for nigh unto every person was kin to the young teacher in one way or another.

And so in reading this story about German settlement in the Lake Creek area, a little community about twelve miles east of Eagle Point on highway 140, you will learn mainly the story of three groups of German settlers who came to this rural spot. Some German family histories are not included, but probably quite closely mirror those told here. Before long all of the German families had pretty much joined forces by marriage. With the passage of time the other ethnic groups married into the German immigrant companies.

So herewith read the tale of the largest group, those who came in 1872 directly from Germany. This was the Meyer, Messal, Kitzman, Tonn and Peck clan. Then you will read of the man who arrived by himself soon after having fought in the Civil War. The last group, the Hoefft-Edler company came from Germany by way of Illinois in 1884. These three groups contained all four of the young school marm's grandparents. And hereby you will also learn the tale of two bachelors, one who is buried in an abandoned spot, and the other who rests by his sweetheart in an old pioneer cemetery.

These German families came to Oregon for pretty much the same reasons motivating thousands from their country between 1850—1900. Statistics show that the trickle of 6700 between 1821—1830, became a flood of 1,452,970 between 1881—1900. They came, looking for more democracy than the German nation provided under Bismark. Some, but not all of those coming were suffering poverty. Others just wished to be free from the threat of forced military service.

In the area of Schwaben Colonie Prenfsen, Germany, there lived two sisters who had a brother who was serving in the naval forces of his homeland. It would seem that this military service must have been during the 1860's. But William Butler didn't like it, not one bit. So he deserted and betook himself unto the land of the free and the home of the brave. We do not know just where and how long he roamed before he came to Jacksonville, Oregon, hoping to make a fortune in the gold strike. Did he succeed? Nothing in handed down family documents show that he did.

But a family chronicle written by Alma Meyer, relates that in "flowing script....to his sisters, Mrs. Kitzman and Mrs. Densch-Messal-Meyer, he wrote telling how a man could acquire 160 acres of free land if he would improve and cultivate the land." Did this ex-sailor, would be wealthy miner, really believe that Lake Creek had farm land better than his former German home Colonie, or did

he just long to see relatives and have a good home cooked meal of German victuals?

It is supposed that Rosina Meyer's first two husbands died. But she had a daughter by her first marriage, Wilhelmine Ernestine Densch. This daughter had moved to New York in 1871. So Uncle Butler's letter probably struck a responsive chord in Rosina's heart. The upshot was that Rosina, and her third husband, August Adolph Meyer decided to bring their brood to American. With them Adolph and Rosina, more commonly called Grossmama — Grandmother in German, brought children Tillie Messal, 26, William Messal, 24, Amelia Messal, 16, and Henrietta Messal, 15. Rosina and August's two children, Herman Gustoff, 14, and Henry August, 2, came also.

Grossmama's sister, evidently widowed, and known as Grandma Kitzman, joined the group, probably because her daughter, Wilhelmina (Minnie) was the wife of Ludwig Tonn who had decided that he too would seek free land. This couple had lost Adolph, 5, before leaving Germany. Making the trip with them were Edward, 23, Amalya Teresa, 9, Amaline (Lena) 5, and Emma Hulda, 2. There is some confusion concerning a son named Wilhelm. Some records show him to have been on the ship's passenger list and others show him to have been born in Oregon. But Minnie was not yet through with child bearing. In Oregon she gave birth to Henry, 1874, Ludwig (Louie), in 1879, and Wilhelmina Caroline in 1874. Little girls must have hated their parents for giving them names so hard to spell.

The other person joining this group was Henry Peck, perhaps not related to other clan members. But no matter. He remedied that situation by marriage to Tillie Messal after arrival in America. After all, she was probably the reason he left his German community.

Preparation for the long trip took a bit of doing, for all family meals on both ship and train were usually prepared by the women unless you had luxury accommodations. Food prepared included cooked goose, lard, dark bread to be spread with goose grease, coffee, sugar, and probably a few other items not listed. Medications were sweet fennel for tea, horehound candy, and Hoffman's cough drops. Their luggage contained Bibles, hymn and prayer books, as well as feather beds. All these were packed in a huge trunk and seamless bags.

The first stage of the trip was by train to Braham and thence to Brahamian Harbor. Trains were so slow that this took several days.

This was the era of luxury ships, ships whose hold might also carry packed in immigrants at a tidy profit. The ship boarded by this group, however, was an accident waiting to happen. It took seven months to cross the Atlantic. The unseaworthy vessel went down to Davy Jones' locker on the return trip to Europe.

The quarters for the German clan were dark, damp, miserable. These holds were so isolated that immigrants were considered safe for debarking even though people in better accommodations were quarantined for smallpox upon arrival. One of the girls making the trip, recalled years later the joy that was theirs at being taken up on a deck once to discover that the sun still existed.

The adults must have been weary to the bone trying to keep children of such varied ages happy. And if Mrs. Tonn had not in-

deed given birth to Wilhelm in Germany, brown bread spread with goose grease might not have done much for morning nausea.

At New York they were met by Grossmama's daughter, Minnie Densch. It is unlikely that Minnie, 27, single, and probably employed at very low wages would have had sleeping room for all of her kin folks. Since many Germans did leave home with some money, it may have been that they were able to lodge themselves in cheap hotel rooms. No record shows the length of the stay in New York.

There are conflicting reports as whether Minnie Densch went west at this time or later. We do know that her half-sister, Tillie Messal, 26, remained in New York to work for a time before joining her family in Oregon.

Alma Meyer writes further, "They now took a train to Omaha. The trip was uneventful as far as the Mississippi River, but the crossing of that bridge was never forgotten by any of the little band. The bridge was very old and just about a wreck and it swayed and creaked, and a few weeks later it fell into the river. They arrived in Omaha on Sunday and as there were no trains going west that day, they were forced to lay over. The children were happy because of the delay and welcomed the break in continued travel. The trip from Omaha to Red Bluff was very slow and tiresome as the grades were steep and long. It was Springtime in the Rockies though, and the young men took advantage of the slow train by jumping off and gathering wild mountain flowers for their best girl. When the engine stopped for water on the grade ahead, each boy proudly hopped aboard to present his gift of flowers."

Alma's account continues, "After many days of such travel the little band of Germans arrived at Red Bluff which was the terminal of the railroad at that time. It was too late to start the remainder of the trip that day, so with some misgivings the men went into the nearby forest and the women settled themselves on the platform of the depot to spend the night."

Uncle Butler met them at Red Bluff in a horse drawn, two wheel cart. Some accounts say that the cart wheels were made of cuts from logs. The cart was far from spacious enough to carry even the meager possessions of the group, let alone providing any transportation for the exhausted immigrants.

Grandma Kitzman, in poor health, took turns riding with the small children. However, Peggy Peck tells that one of the older Tonn girls, probably Amalya, 9, carried Emma, 2, most of the way from Red Bluff to Salt Creek.

Alma Meyer's account continues, "One interesting event happening to the group was at the toll gate on the Siskiyou. When they started through they realized a little shepherd dog which had joined them along the way was missing. August Meyer ordered them all to camp on the California side while he took two of the younger men to look for the dog. They found him in a short time but when they returned it was too late to travel as the road was too narrow and dangerous to chance at night. They found camping on the summit of the Siskiyou at that time of year was quite uncomfortable."

All hopes for the good life were dashed when they reached Salt Creek to find that they had exchanged "fertile fields and comfortable homes for wooded hillsides, no stock, and no tools. For shelter they had only a temporarily empty schoolhouse."

Ludwig Tonn was so distraught that he found a crooked stick to serve as a cane and started walking back to Germany that very night. August Meyer insisted that Ludwig at least spend the night there before wearing out anymore shoe leather.

By morning, August and Ludwig had decided to make the best of the situation. If the record showing William Tonn's birthdate to have been March 22, 1882, is correct, they could not have been in the crowded schoolroom long before his delivery. Minnie must have been thankful that Ludwig had been persuaded to exchange his plan for returning to Germany for settling down to creating a home. All lists do show that baby William died in Oregon, May 18, 1883. Pioneer life took its greatest toll on the mother and small children.

A mother could hardly spare time to grieve for a child for another baby usually followed soon. Minnie gave birth to Henry Tonn, Dec. 19, 1874, to Ludwig (Louie), Feb. 10, 1879, and to Wilhemine (Minnie) Feb. 6, 1882.

August Meyer homesteaded the very spot where he had spent his first night on Salt Creek. Ludwig took up a homestead about a mile further up the creek. Later, Mr. Tonn sold this homestead to William Messal and moved to land at the spot where Lost Creek empties into Little Butte.

Hard reality and a native relish for hard work activated this pioneer group to become very self sufficient within a short time. Every daylight hour was spent by every able bodied person in planting gardens, orchards, clearing land for pasture and hay, and in building, first, simple cabins and then larger homes for their sizable families.

German farming seems to have followed pretty much the format of all early homesteading. They grew onions, potatoes, beans, hay and corn. They acquired cattle, hogs, chickens, horses, and geese. The flocks of geese may have been more common to the Germans than to others. Children of German heritage found that feathers from geese for pillows and goose grease for doctoring chest congestion were considered necessities. Roast goose was common for a holiday meal.

Fruit was prepared for drying during the evening "resting" time. Extra vegetables were salted down in barrels. Meat was smoked and lard rendered. Staples such as flour, sugar, salt, calico and gingham were secured in Medford by barter for cured bacon, lard, and dry beans. At times kerosene cans would be packed with butter and taken by horseback to the Bell Store in Brownboro for barter.

Haying was probably the most frantic time of year for both men and women. Hay crews moved from place to place for the harvest. The housewife would often have to prepare meals three times a day for a dozen or so hayhands. At times, too, the meals were cooked in tent kitchen and then dirty dishes were hauled home to be washed, probably by lamplight after the men had fallen asleep on the feather beds. Butchering seems to have been a more relaxed time. Families then had leisure for visiting as they worked together to care for the meat.

The younger men worked as sheepherders, hauled freight, and did all manner of work to raise funds so that they too could acquire money to own land and build homes for their young families. Most of these sturdy immigrants became, not wealthy, but at least comfortable as the years passed. Some built large, quite elegant two story homes.

And evidently they had time for courting. Minnie Densch married a Nussbaum. Messals married into the Frey, Walch, Peck, Downing and Demmer families. Further marriages brought in such names as Bussy, Newstrom, Schultz, Farlow, Edler, Gardener, Grissom and others.

Most marriages probably resulted from mutual attraction. Peggy Peck, though, tells a handed down family story claiming that

Emma Tonn was forced against her wishes to marry a Henry Wahlers. Did the marriage turn out well? No records answer that question. A recollection of Hazel Meyer attests that Louie Tonn, born in Oregon in 1879, sent for a mail order bride. We know only that her name was Garnet. All of the neighbors considered both Louie and Garnet a bit "odd." Louie must have considered Garnet altogether too odd for he left her and no one ever knew what became of him.

The 1872 group seems to have been the largest collection of German people to have settled in the Lake Creek area at one time, but others came at different times and for other reasons. However, many of them did marry into this larger clan. Grossmama's sixth child, Henrieta Messal, 15 when coming to the U.S. was an illustration of this. Family recollection is that Yetta was very likely working in Jacksonville when she met and married a George W. Frey on Jan. 24, 1875. The history of George Frey has been the most difficult to trace and document. Stories gathered from various family members indicate that he came from Germany at the age of 9. It is known that in Germany there was a town called Freyville. A passenger list from Hamburg, Germany, dated 1860, shows names for a group of Freys. A G. Frey is listed there. Family recollection is also that George's family settles in Pennsylvania. This same source infers that he left home and was on his own at a very early age. Some of the Freys believe that George had an unkind stepmother, and since many women died young, and husbands often remarried soon, this is very likely. The next record with certain validity is that George fought in the Union forces during the Civil War as a drummer boy. He was only 14. The family owns certain memorabilia proving this.

It is understood too, that some of the Frey family moved west. Census records from Monroe County, Illinois, for 1870, show a group of Freys. The name Jacob appears on both the 1860 passenger list and the 1870 census. Could this have been the same family, minus George now long gone? It is likely for there were many Germans in this Illinois location.

It is known that George came west, fought as a member of the Oregon volunteer group in the Modoc Indian Wars, and that he did work some gold strikes in the Jacksonville area. Recalled conversations with Peter Britt during the 1930's confirm that George Frey was a cobbler in Jacksonville. It must have been during this time that he met and married Yetta.

A Frey granddaughter recalls her Grandmother's hair raising account of the horseback trip which she and George made from Jacksonville to Happy Camp, California. Yetta seemed still to tremble in fright as she recalled the hordes of rattlesnakes encountered.

Later the Freys moved to the Lake Creek area where they homesteaded several different places and where all of their seven sons were born. George farmed but also served as a supervisor for county roadwork. All men were required to do a certain number of days of work annually on the county roads. Those choosing not to do so, paid to have someone else take their place. Ledgers are still in the family possession showing payment of from \$.50 to \$1.50 per day to these substitute workers. Many of the younger men used this as a method of earning some cash.

Childbirth took toll in the Frey family too. When Peter, a very large baby, was being delivered, the country doctor said, "Mr. Frey, I am unable to save both mother and child. Which will it be?" George quickly chose to save his wife. But treatment for the agony of Yetta's full breasts could not be solved with a quick word. George brought in a puppy to nurse Yetta, who promptly almost

fainted. Yetta was known at times to "wet nurse" some of the little McAllisters who were nearby neighbors. Mrs. McAllister's poor health often made adequate nursing difficult. There must not have been a baby McAllister available at the time. Salve finally eased the pain. And salve brought from Germany healed son, Harry, without scars when he fell into a tub of hot water.

The six Frey sons who grew to maturity were Ed, George, Harry, Fritz, Otto, and Irving. Most of them resided in the Lake Creek area the major part of their lives.

One grandchild remembers Mr. Frey as a stately old gentleman who walked ram rod straight. His long white beard set him apart from most of the men of the day. He would sit smoking his pipe, — wife #1, Yetta said, and reading the newspaper — wife #2, also according to Yetta, a good part of the time. Perhaps he was too elderly to work then, or perhaps he didn't need too, since he had reared six strapping sons, most of whom married later in than many men of the time. Two of them, Ed and George never married.

The amalgamation of the German community was furthered when Harry Frey married Hannah Edler. Harry was killed in a tragic hunting accident just two weeks before the birth of daughter, Harriet. About ten years later, Hannah married another Frey son, Otto. Fritz Frey married Flora Edler in 1917.

The Edler family came to the Lake Creek area in still a different fashion. August Edler came to Illinois from Germany (in Germany the name was von Edler), in 1863 at the age of 12. The family left Germany in order to avoid the military conscription of the time. The family farmed rented, fertile bottom land along the Mississippi. This was in Monroe County.

When he was 20, August married Maria Doer, also 20. She was a second generation German, who was reasonably well educated for the day and who spoke both English and German fluently, as was often the case. The young couple lived with August's parents in one room set aside for them. August's father had suffered a stroke which left his mind clouded. To the young Maria fell the task of caring for the difficult old gentleman.

Maria, like so many others of that time, had come from a home where a step-mother made life less than pleasant. But she did have some good years when she worked in the home of a St. Louis family operating a salt store. Maria's mistress was very kind, baking and serving the hired help huge, delicious cakes every evening for snacks.

By the second year of marriage, August had made enough on his crop to move to a home of his own. Here Maria gave birth to Gus, 1872, Henry?, Chris, 1877, Charles, 1882, and Louisa in 1884. One baby was still born, and another Lizzie, died at 18 months as a result of severe burns from playing with fire while she and the other children were left alone in the house. The parents were in the barnyard grinding corn when this happened. The child died by morning.

The Edlers, along with their close friends, the Hoeffts, belonged to the German Evangelical Church. By 1884, Hoeffts and Edlers decided to move their families to the west coast. Their motives were double — to secure a location for a colony of fellow believers and to remove themselves for the Mississippi River area where the women constantly suffered from what was then termed "chills and fever" — in other words, malaria. Plans included provisions for meal preparation during the train trip west. The Hoefft family included children, Minnie and Henry. So this meant that there were at least 11 mouths to feed during the journey. Household belongings were also transported on the train.

First stop was Petaluma, California. Here the families stayed while Mr. Hoefft and Mr. Edler went north as far as Washington, looking for what they considered the perfect site. Washington didn't please, for there August saw a calf lacking a tail. He was told that the severe cold the previous winter had caused the problem. While the men were gone, every last child at Petaluma had the measles. Charley's eyesight seemed severely impaired after his bout with the measles, but according to family legend, normal sight returned at the excitement of having his father return.

Next the two families went by ship from California to Portland, Oregon. Everyone but Gus and Mr. Hoefft became so seasick that food preparation was entirely forgotten—by everyone but Gus who was famished. Mr. Hoefft finally took note and guided the timid lad to the ship's dining room.

The next leg of the search was made by train from Portland to Ashland. From Ashland the group made their way to the German settlement at Lake Creek. Here the Edlers stayed on South Fork property belonging to Adolph Peck. The Hoeffts settled on farm land which had good bottom soil along the stream.

While the Edlers were on the Peck property, their second little Elisabeth was born August 10. Here, too, the bulldog for which August had refused \$50.00 on the trip west, died from salmon poisoning. This event seemed almost to rival importance, that of the birth of baby Elisabeth!

August Edler was an interesting fellow, utterly devoted to neatness, the welfare of his stock, hard work and honesty. However, he seemed to have a strange lack of concern for family comfort.

Fertile bottom land was already nearly all in the ownership of others. When he finally secured 40 acres of school land on the top of Hespia Mountain on the North Fork of Little Butte, he forthwith built a huge, warm, well arranged log barn and a small cabin with a sleeping loft for his family. This door is still in use on the second old cabin built with some material salvaged when the first one was torn down.

August's farming was pretty much like that of all German farmers in the area, only the soil was poorly qualified to raise much of anything without a lot of backbreaking labor. But he, along with the assistance of offspring who learned to work hard and everlastingly, managed a living of sorts from that 40 acres plus some other leased land. August, along with the older boys, often worked for more prosperous farmers in the valley.

An orchard still bearing fruit in 1989, was set out; rock fences were built; large gardens were planted and hay cut. And stockman that he was, August raised flax to give his cattle during calving in the winter months.

The cabin didn't get any larger but the family did. William, 1887, Fritz, 1869, Hannah, 1890, Flora, 1893, and Andrew, 1896, were all born at the cabin. A Mrs. Miller from a nearby farm, served as midwife.

Maria cooked, baked, sewed, knit, served as midwife for neighbors and met all adversities head on. The religious training of their children was a bit hard to come by, but they along with many other German families of the area, attended at least a few times a year, services conducted in German in a Lutheran church in the valley. And their old minister from Illinois, Pastor Hosta, came out at least once to conduct confirmation classes for the children. These were held part of the time at the Edler cabin and part of the time at the Hoeffts on South Fork. Other neighbor children in the area also attended. An old family trunk recently yielded confirmation papers for some of the children, signed by Pastor Hosta. In the trunk was also found the baptismal and confirmation record for August himself. This trunk held

well worn German Bibles, hymn books, and a German medical self help book.

As the years went by, schooling for the children seemed more important and Edlers as well as Freys and McAllisters secured by rent or purchase, homes in the valley. These one room schools usually held only three month sessions. The German children, not fluent in English, had hard sledding at times. And so did some of the children who spoke Italian such as the Gardeners. Pioneers were good neighbors but children could be cruel to each other.

In 1905, Maria met another challenge when a Mr. Edwards, married to Minnie Hoefft Edwards, lost his wife after the birth of their fifth child, Elisabeth. He drove a wagon, milk cow tied behind, over to the rented valley place where the Edler family lived. He handed over Elisabeth, covered with boils, and really very ill. The baby was accepted with love and cared and forever afterward considered part of the family. It is said that Mrs. Edler walked the floor at night, baby in her arms, saying, "Oh, I just don't know if we can save her!" Elisabeth grew up to be a bouncing, pretty girl who lived with Elders until she returned to her father at the age of 12.

Strangely, no marriages came about between the Hoeffts and the Edlers. But lifelong love story did transpire. Charley Edler loved and courted Lizzie Hoefft. But before they could marry, Lizzie died of "quick consumption" — TB. Charley never married, nor did he ever forget his beloved Lizzie. During his many bachelor years, he was a bit of a drifter, never really settling down in one place or at one job for very long. In the family he became known as well — "interesting". At the time of his final illness, he lived with his nephew Harry.

He pleaded with Harry's wife, Mae, "When I die, promise me that you will bury me beside my sweetheart, Lizzie. And if you take flowers to my grave, put some on hers too." And so rests in a deserted pioneer cemetery up a very steep rocky road on Nussbaum Hill on South Fork. Nephews and friends carried his casket up there and labored hard to dig a grave in the rocky area. In the same cemetery, Maria Edler rests as does Elisabeth Edward's mother, Henry Edler and many other pioneers from the Lake Creek area.

As the years passed, these German folk became thoroughly integrated into American culture. They all spoke English without accent, became loyal U.S. citizens, fought and died in both World Wars, helped with war efforts, and were on the whole, good citizens. It is doubtful if any of the third and fourth generation speak any German fluently.

But there is not a single Edler grandson to carry on the family name. The only one, Donald, was killed in Germany while in service. There are no male Frey great grandsons, and only three adult male Meyers. The last male Messal to live in this area was Lawrence, now dead. Some German family names may be gone, but many of the descendants still like German coffee cake at Christmas, prefer feather pillows and treasure German Christmas music.

But what of Uncle Butler who led the first migration? He found himself in great disfavor with his kin, removed himself to Wasson Canyon above what is now the C-2 Ranch. Here he lived and died. A legend, not widely circulated, has it that he caused his own death by taking strychnine to end the misery once and for all.

And so Uncle Butler, the dreamer, and mayhap schemer, rests in an unmarked grave near a tumble down barn. And Uncle Charley Edler, the man who never forgot his first love, sleeps beside his sweetheart in a deserted pioneer cemetery. ❀

A native of Lake Creek, Helen Barrow was born and reared in Lake Creek. She is the daughter of Frederick and Flora Frey. Her mother was an Edler. She taught at a one-room school house called the Lost Creek School. She presently lives in Eagle Point and was recently elected as a board member for School District #9.



South Butte School, 1914. Photo #1048 Courtesy of Southern Oregon Historical Society. Can you recognize or name any of the people in this picture? Original available for inspection at Lake Creek Historical Society office.

Publishing Information

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